

Bosque Restoration Demonstration Project Progress Report
Submitted by Steve Harris, Rio Grande Restoration, August 27, 2003

The Bosque Restoration Demonstration Project, on the Rio Grande in Albuquerque, New Mexico, is a cooperative project of Rio Grande Restoration, City of Albuquerque Open Space Division and Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District. The project, involving the eradication of non-native trees and revegetation with native species on a 10 acre site, was accomplished with financial support from the US Bureau of Reclamation (grant # 01-F6-40-5910).

The two phase project commenced in Fall, 2001 as inmate work crews were engaged to remove salt cedar and Russian olive trees from an initial 5 acres of riparian bosque. Volunteers from the Albuquerque community planted cottonwood and willow poles in Spring, 2002. According to project design, dense brushy areas dominated by salt cedar were revegetated with an open canopy of trees, underlain with native grasses and shrubs. The tree plantings were about 80% successful. We are very please that the clearing allowed spontaneous revegetation of the under canopy.

The first phase also had a public outreach component, with site tours provided to public officials and media.

Phase two commenced in Spring, 2003 with removal of jetty jacks which had hardened the riverbanks and prevented the natural connection between the Rio Grande and its floodplain. Inmate crews have removed an additional 5 acres in this phase. Active revegetation, again with volunteers from the local community, is scheduled for Fall, 2003.

Already the site has attracted dispersed recreation from joggers, picnickers and bird watchers. Its location in proximity to the Albuquerque Bio-Park at city center and its new-found accessibility must be credited with this moderately heavy recreational use. We also believe that the site has provided the additional benefit of improved habitat for migratory birds, which benefit should increase as the native plantings mature. Because the site is now attractive to residents and visitors, the project should achieve its objective of increasing public understanding of and support for further, more extensive restoration efforts, which are now in the design phase.

The project is now 80% complete. After the phase two plantings are in place, the final task will be the placement of interpretive signs, which explain the differences between a healthy, functional riparian area and nearby unrestored areas. Signs will be in place by the end of the calendar year, 2003.

Rio Grande Restoration has provided management of the project; Open Space supplied machinery and technical assistance; the Conservancy District allowed access to project lands along the Rio Grande. These partnering entities, as well the Bureau's support, will be acknowledged by the on-site signage, for their contributions to this successful project.

Bosque Project Request for Advance: Rio Grande Restoration anticipates receiving an invoice for inmate labor from the state Department of Corrections before the end of year 2002. Total requested, \$15,000, is Bureau contract portion of this obligation for work already accomplished on Bosque Restoration Demonstration Project.

Bosque Project Accomplishment, as of October 21, 2002: A five acre riparian site (located ~ .7mi downstream of Central Ave. Bridge) has been cleared of non-native trees and brush and ~40% planted with cottonwood poles. An interpretive sign has been ordered, which identifies Rio Grande Restoration, Bureau, conservancy district and Albuquerque Open Space as cooperators in this habitat restoration demonstration project. Over 100 visitors, including city administration and business leaders have taken guided tours through the site with us. City has provided machinery and volunteers: and RGR has mobilized volunteers, provided ongoing site monitoring, prepared interpretive leaflets and signs, conducted interpretive tours and contracted for inmate labor. Site is also open to public access for dispersed recreation.

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